Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.

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PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

First many congratulations to Kilian Nathan for his second Large Gold at Ameripex for his fine collection of Nicaragua. One more and he and his collection will reach the F.I.P. Championship Class!

Other Central American subscribers who gained awards were Leo Harris a Large Vermeil for Ecuador, Finn Stjernholck a Vermeil for his collection of Salvador Postal Stationery and Robert D'Elia a Large Silver for his Ecuador. Leo Harris also gained two Large Silvers for literature - "The Postal History of Ecuador" written in conjunction with Percy Bargholtz and Señor Paez, and for his "Postal History of Central America".

As much of the latter was originally published through Mainsheet, perhaps a few remarks may be in order. Although the work and scholarship of Leo Harris deserve the greatest praise, the publication side by the Collectors Club disappointed. First the reproduction of the maps, together with the lack of scale of those in the text, as well as no acknowledgement of the ownership of the covers illustrated, deserves comment. More so is the price of $40 for a softbound book; surely at this high price something which could withstand heavy use could have been made? This price will deny its distribution to many collectors who will not be able to afford as much as forty dollars.

Plans were made for the forthcoming season at our Annual General Meeting of Spanish Main last month. There will be the usual Presidential meeting on Saturday September 6th, a meeting of the Chile Group on Saturday October 4th, our bi-annual auction will be held on November 15th and the Spanish Main Cup will be held on December 6th. All meetings will be in the Allenby Room at the Victory Services Club and will start at 10.30 a.m..

Material for the November auction is already being accepted by our Sales Manager, Brian Moorhouse (PO Box 105, PETERBOROUGH PE3 8TQ, England) and we look forward to many entries from our Central American members for the Spanish Main Cup in December.

There will be meetings of the Central American Study Group and a general meeting in Manchester next Spring. Full details will appear in the next Newsletter.

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NEWTON ABBOT
Devon TQ12 1JX

John Fosbery
President, Spanish Main

NICARAGUA: AN EARLIER U.S. INTERVENTION

by KILIAN E NATHAN, FRPS,L

It has generally been accepted that the first landing of United States marines occurred on the Bluefields coast in 1910, in response to a worsening political situation. This, and later landings on the west coast are well documented and have been the subject of various articles over the years.

For many years I have searched for covers for my collection in this special field, and during that time of the many covers I have acquired none have been so exciting as the three illustrated here. They are philatelic proof of an earlier intervention which has hitherto gone (philatelically) unrecorded.

The ship involved was the USS Alert, under the direction of Commander Franklin Hanford. It was the third US navy ship of that name, and was a small iron gunboat of 1110 tons, launched in 1876 and so reliant mostly on sails. She was recommissioned on 4 April 1894, and joined the Pacific Squadron, cruising along the U.S. west coast and Central American waters. The "Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships", apart from giving details about the ship itself, tells us that "Between 2 and 4 May 1896 she landed men at Corinto, to protect American citizens and property and repeated the operation at San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua 7-8 February 1898".

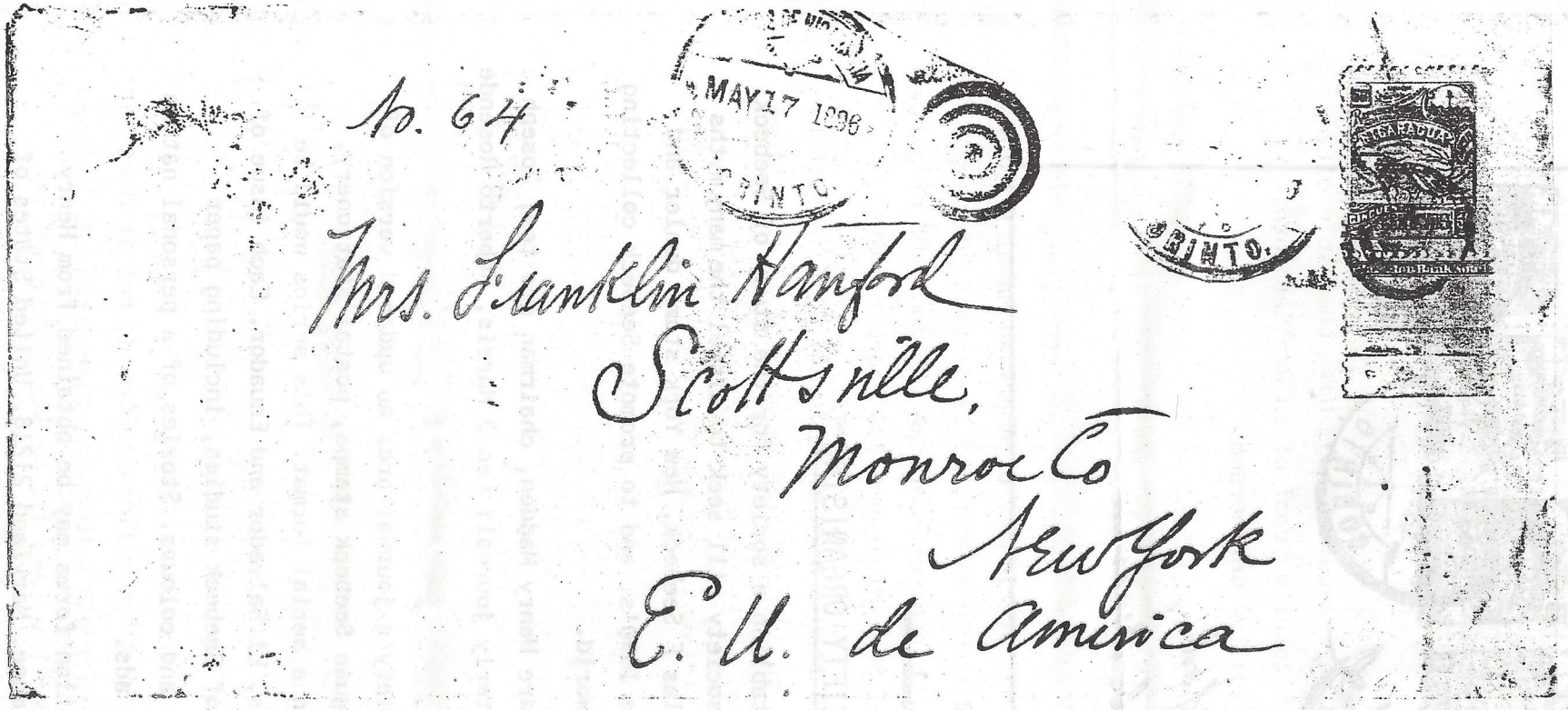
Figure 1 is a cover from Commander Hanford to his wife in February 1896, a little while before the men were landed. The return address clearly shows that the letter was written whilst the ship was at Corinto. It is franked with a delightful variety of 1896 definitives totalling 20 centavos, reached New York City on 2 March, and was delivered the following day.

Figure 2, also from Commander Hanford to his wife on 17 May 1896, is another "find" in itself, bearing as it does a FIFTY centavos stamp as franking. This is the only cover with a 50 centavos value of 1896 I have ever seen or heard of! The stamp is from the bottom of the sheet, and still attached to the sheet margin which bears the imprint "Hamilton Bank Note". What a Seebeck cover!

Figure 3 is interesting too, although not so attractive in appearance as the other two. It was sent to Commander Handford (sic) in Corinto, by the U.S. Consulate in Managua on 26 May 1896. Unfortunately the seal on the back (seeping through to the front) has broken off. The cover has been addressed with a typewriter which is very early, especially in Nicaragua.

We know men were landed (Alert probably had a few marines on board, but it does not follow it was they who were landed) between 2 and 4 May, and that Commander Hanford was still stationed at Corinto on 26th, but how long did he stay? What was the reason behind the need to land men to protect citizens and property? Perhaps these covers raise more questions than they answer, but you can imagine how happy I felt when I first held these three covers in my hands. It is simply amazing that after 30 years of intensive searching and collecting, one can still find new and interesting items from this fascinating country.

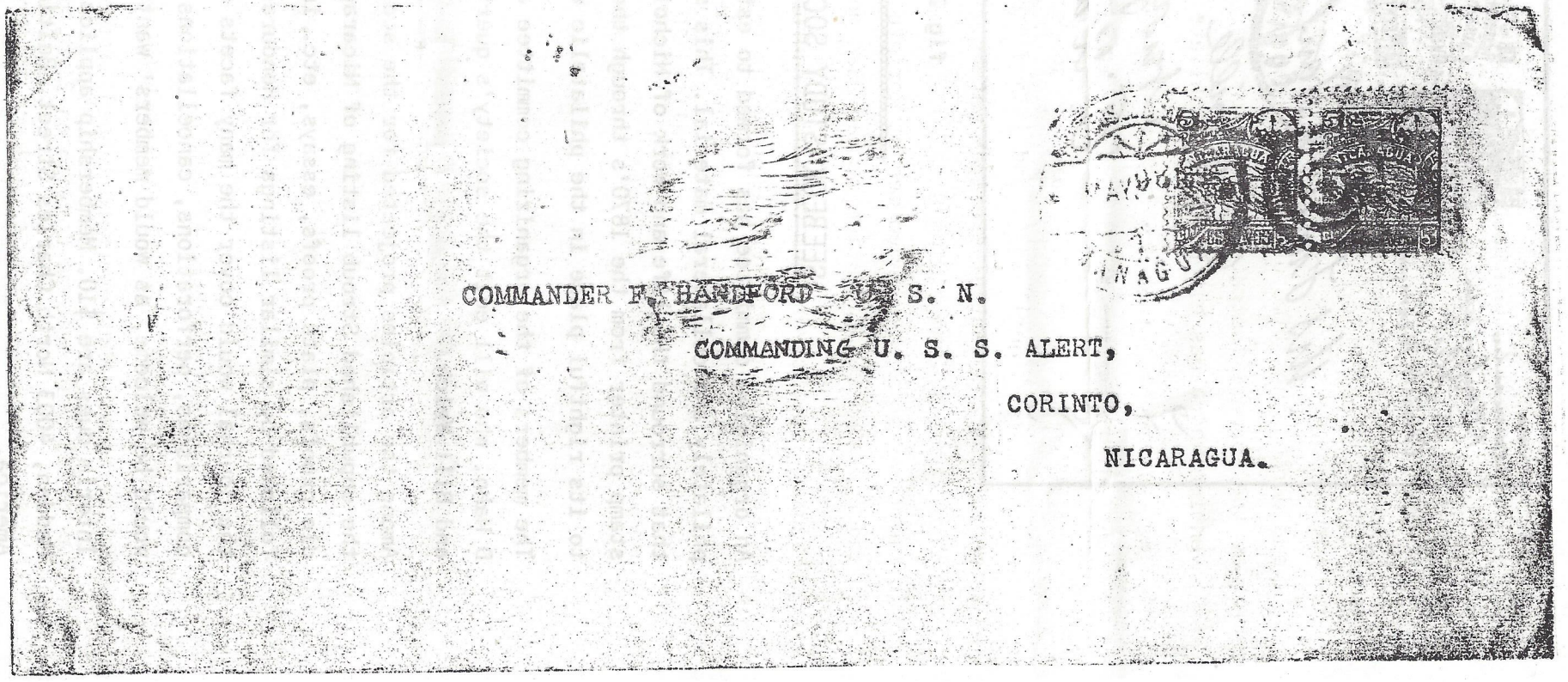
fig 1



No. 64

Mrs. Franklin Hanford
Scottsville,
Monroe Co
New York
E. U. de America

fig 3



COMMANDER F. HANFORD U. S. N.
COMMANDING U. S. S. ALERT,
CORINTO,
NICARAGUA.

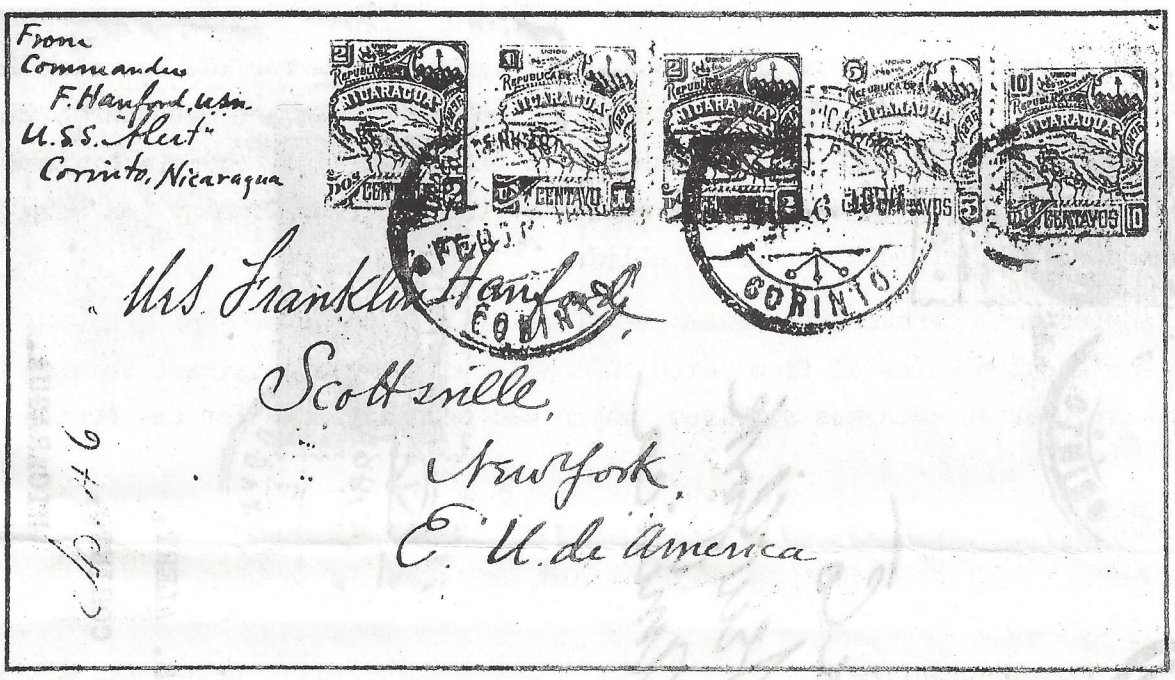


fig 2

SEEBECK STUDY SOCIETY ORGANISING

An organising committee has formed to establish a society for the study of Seebeck philately and collateral material. This society will seek to dispel the many myths that surround the life and work of Nicholas F Seebeck, New York stamp dealer and stamp printer from the 1870's through the 1890's, and to promote Seebeck collecting to its rightful place in the philatelic world.

The members of the organizing committee are Henry Madden, chairman pro tem; Joseph D Hahn, who will edit the society's quarterly journal; Leo J Harris, Roberto Rosende and Bill Welch.

Among the articles projected for the society's journal are: an updated version of the unpublished Stroub listing of Nicaraguan Seebeck stamps, postal stationery, die proofs, plate proofs, essays, etc., in a serial format. This series would be followed by similar listings for Honduras, El Salvador and Ecuador. Each issue of the journal would cover the many facets of Seebeck studies, including paper comparisons, perforations, cancellations and colours. Stories of a personal nature would be welcome, as would members' want ads.

Interim dues are $10. Membership application forms may be obtained from Henry Madden, 4003 North Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21218, United States of America.

PRINTING FIGURES OF THE WATERLOW ISSUES OF NICARAGUA

Brian Moorhouse has supplied us with the printing figures for the Waterlow Issues of Nicaragua. The loss of postal records in the earthquake and subsequent fire of 1931, has meant that such information has to be pieced together more by luck than research. The discovery of the file copies of the Waterlow Company has been a tremendous piece of luck for philatelists.

The figures are not complete; examples of all file sheets were not included in the Waterlow archive material from which this information was obtained. We are fortunate that so much has survived, which had been intended for destruction.

Arms type of May 1907

4c	150,000	15c	30,000	20c	60,000
10c	300,000			50c	60,000

Zelaya - Costa Atlantica B

1c	10,000	5c	12,000	50c	2,000
2c	120,000	10c	30,000	1p	2,000
3c	12,000	15c	20,000	2p	2,000
4c	6,000	20c	6,000	5p	2,000

Zelaya - Costa Atlantica C

1c	10,000	5c	10,000	50c	1,000
2c	10,000	10c	20,000	1p	1,000
3c	10,000	15c	10,000	2p	1,000
4c	6,000	20c	6,000	5p	1,000

Liberty Type, 1912

2c	200,000	6c	200,000	35c	800,000
3c	200,000	10c	1,200,000	50c	200,000
4c	300,000	15c	500,000	1p	200,000
5c	700,000	20c	200,000	2p	200,000
		25c	300,000		

Zelaya Locomotive Type

1c - 5p 70,000 of each value

Liberty Type, Officials

1c - 5p 70,000 of each value

DATA PROTECTION ACT 1984

Details of each member's name, address and notes on subscription are held on computer. If any individual member objects, kindly write in and the name will be removed and membership details will be held manually.

THE SEEBECK SETS OF 1892 by JOHN FOSBERY

I am at present making a topical collection on the story of Christopher Columbus. Three of the four Seebeck sets for 1892 show pictures of Columbus landing or sighting land. I have sidestepped my immediate objective to try to do something I have wanted to do for a very long time - to study Seebeck sets collectively by the year rather than the normal way of studying the sets of each individual Republic. I feel that a collective study must - or should - throw up some similarities. What follows is a summary of thoughts and facts that have come from my short studies. There are many questions unanswered but I feel pretty certain that a similar study of other years will throw up not very unsimilar problems. We shall see.

First thing to do is to list the values issued in the sets for the four relevant Republics - Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Ecuador. The latter is outside the scope of my Columbus collection and being based on a contract arranged through Etheridge, who got the contract with Seebeck probably because it was refused by his immediate employer Waterlow, as well as by other printing firms in New York, may perhaps show some different features from the three Central American Republics.

1892. Hamilton Bank Note Company Inc. (Summary ex Stanley Gibbons' Catalogue).

	Salvador	Honduras	Nicaragua	Ecuador
1c	green	slate	brown	orange
2c	orange brown	blue	vermilion	brown
3c	pale ultramarine	-	-	-
5c	slate/grey	apple green	deep blue	verm ilion
10c	pale red	blue green	slate	green
11c	brown	-	-	-
20c	orange	vermilion	maroon	chestnut
25c	maroon	orange brown	-	-
30c	-	ultramarine	-	-
40c	-	orange	-	-
50c	yellow	brown	violet	maroon
75c	-	lake	-	-
1p	carmine lake	violet	brown	deep blue
2p	-	-	green	-
5p	-	-	carmine	violet (error blue green)
10p	-	-	dull orange	-

Usage of the various Denominations

From an old album published around the 1890's I find the currency of all three Central American Republics quoted as:- 1 Peso = 8 reales = 100 centavos. If this is correct one would have expected to see the same values in the sets for all three Republics but this is far from the case. The correspondence between the Republics and the Hamilton Bank Note Company on this subject must have been most interesting. Looking at the postal stationery values issued, you seem to begin to get a clue on the usage of each denomination.

First turn to Salvador; there are postal cards for 1, 2 and 3 centavos. It seems reasonable to deduce the 1c is a local urban or drop letter rate, the 2c is for internal and the 3c is for external use. For envelopes there are 1, 5, 10, 11, 20 and 22 centavos items. The 1c might be for a local unsealed rate for a bill or Christmas card or similar printed matter, or a drop letter; the 5c should be internal letter rate and the 11c is external letter rate to Europe. The 10c might be special rate to other Central American Republics and the 20c and 22c double weight rate for 10c and 11c letters. This leaves us with the 50c and 1p denominations and I hope some Salvador specialist will inform us of their individual usage and also confirm my deductions of other rates. Wrappers were printed for 2, 3, 6 and 12 centavos rates and the last two do not seem to marry up with issued stamps and I do not know their use.

Honduras has postal cards, 2c and 3c, presumably for internal and external rates. Envelopes were made for 1, 5, 10, 20 and 25 centavos; guessing the 1c might be for local printed matter or drop letters and the 5c and 10c were for internal and external letters. The 20c was presumably a double weight rate and I await a Honduras specialist to inform us of the use to which the 25c stationery envelope and the 30, 50, 75 centavos and 1p stamps were put.

Nicaragua had 2c and 3c postal cards to cover internal and external rates; presumably again the 1c value in the stamp set might have covered a rate for local printed mail. Stationery envelopes exist for 5, 10, 20 and 25 centavos rates; the 5c and 10c are respectively for internal and external letters, the 20c is for double rate mail, but I do not know the use for the 25c. (20c would pay a foreign registered letter, 25c with A.R. fee - Ed). This leaves usage for the stamp denominations 50 centavos and 1, 2, 5 and 10p unaccounted for. Kilian Nathan sent me photostats of the 30 covers of this 1892 issue in his collection; most conform with the above, although I have no confirmation of my suggested 1c urban rate. In Kilian Nathan's lot there is but one cover with a 50c rate (2 x 20c and 1 x 10c) from San Juan del Norte to New York; two covers to Hamburg via French Steamers rated 13c and 15c suggest there might have been a special rate for this route.

Regarding the peso values, do genuine commercial covers exist for any of these either singly or in combination with other values? It seems possible that these high values might have had a use as forms of payment for internal departmental petty cash transfers.

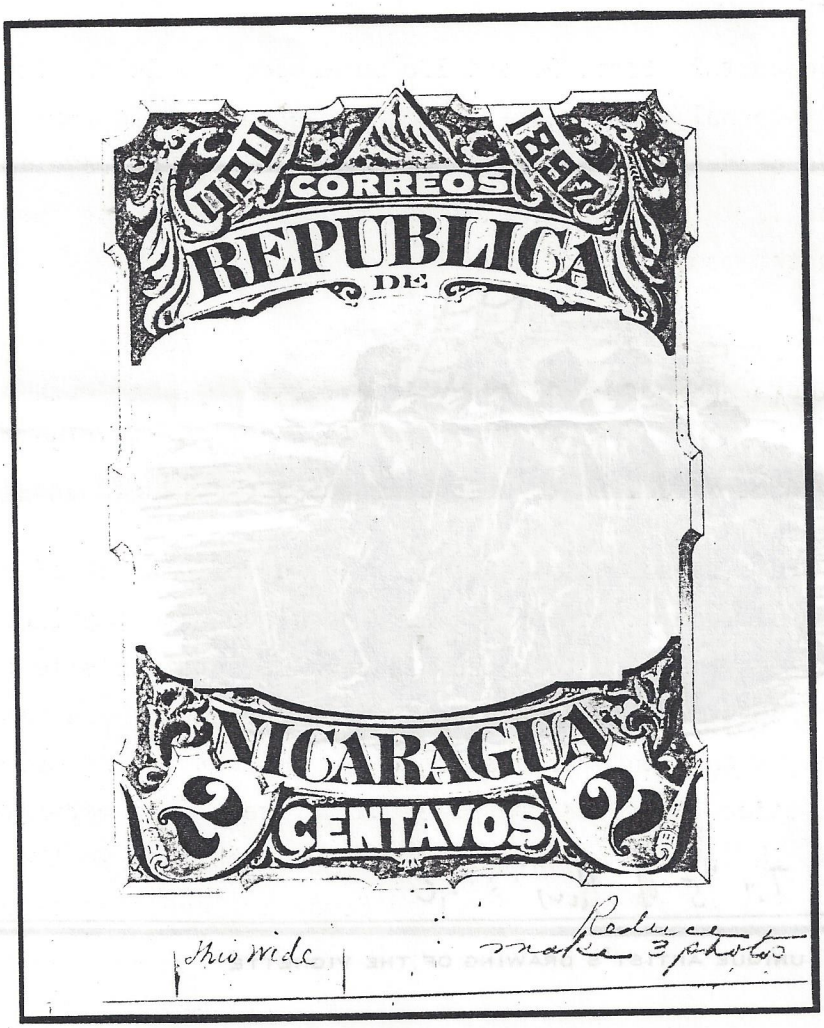
Ecuador had 2c and 3c postal cards, 5c and 10c envelopes and 1c and 2c wrappers. These seem to prove internal and external rates for cards and letters and the 1c wrapper seems to give credence to my presumption above for a 1c rate for printed urban mail. We are still left without knowing the specific use for the 50c and 1 and 5 peso values in the postage set.

Imperforate plate proofs or colour trials on similar paper to the issued stamps but in different colours abound for all four Republics. Why? It certainly seems as if they might have been used to promote sales after demonetisation rather than for use by the individual Republics to help agree colours or decide denominations.

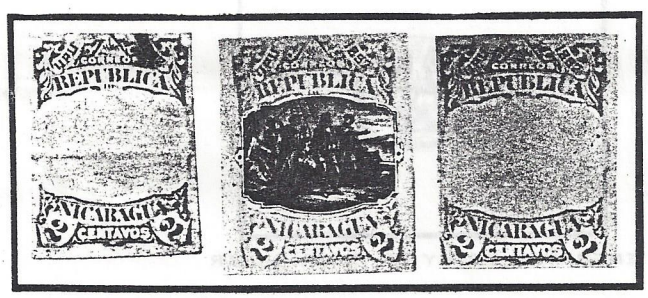
Papers for all the 1892 sets seem similar and I see no definite proof of any second printing. It would seem that Seebeck held back adequate supplies to fill orders from the Republics and also to cover his requirements for sale to dealers after demonetisation. Quast and Irving Green definitely state there was no reprinting for Nicaragua and Honduras respectively. In fact Irving Green states "No contract specification indicates the paper to be used. This permitted the company wide latitude in its selection and they bought job lots in the open market as needed". Regarding Salvador however Hahn and Sousa believe that reprints for the 1892 issue of this Republic do exist. They seem to base their statement on quality of paper and also stress the lack of genuinely used examples on the paper which they suggest reprints might have been made. For Nicaragua two of Kilian Nathan's covers are on bluish paper and this may be accounted for from a short run on one of Irving Green's suggested job lots.

Cancels. In the past when I made collections of Salvador and Nicaragua I tended to prefer used stamps on cover. Although I once owned a considerable quantity of used singles from the collection of the late Stanley Daft, I was not wholly happy with them. Literacy was low and populations far from high (my old album gives them in the early '90's as:- Salvador 664,513, Honduras 381,938, Nicaragua 300,000, and Ecuador 1,500,000) and all genuine used copies are certainly uncommon. I know forged cancellations do exist but I cannot recall being told who made them, why, and who distributed or sold them and when. One reads continuously about these issues being cancelled to order to help sales to collectors; I have a G B Calman price list and it seems to me strange that the only Seebeck issues listed under his offers of used stamps are 1894 Nicaragua Officials and assorted Nicaraguan Telegraphs! Again as far as I recall there were no cancelled to order sheets in the remainder stocks sold to Bela Sekula.

ORIGINAL ARTIST'S DRAWING
AND PHOTOGRAPHS



UNIQUE ARTIST'S DRAWING OF THE FRAME



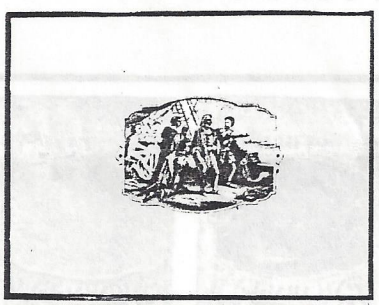
ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHS OF FRAME AS ORDERED
BY THE PENCIL NOTATION ON ABOVE DRAWING.

THE 1892 ISSUE WAS MODELED AFTER THIS DRAWING

Courtesy of the Argyll Etkin Gallery, Conduit St, London W1

ORIGINAL ARTIST'S DRAWING
AND ESSAY

UNIQUE ARTIST'S DRAWING OF THE VIGNETTE



ENGRAVED ESSAY ON INDIA PAPER

THE VIGNETTE OF THE 1892 ISSUE WAS MODELED AFTER THIS DRAWING

Courtesy of the Argyll Etkin Gallery, Conduit St, London W1

The designs do not seem to have been taken from recognised pictures and appear to be the work of the Hamilton designers. It is interesting that in both Salvador and Nicaragua the designs are not exactly the same throughout. In Salvador many denominations have the figures of value shaded whereas others are white. In Nicaragua the 2c and 5c value tablets are both vertical whereas all the others are diagonally positioned.

It would seem that complete dies of the frame and vignette were made without the denomination and then the values and figures were individually engraved. In Honduras note the completely different types of "1" in the centavo and peso values; in Nicaragua there are different fonts for the figures "1" in the centavo and peso values and again in the 10 centavos and the 10 pesos.

Colours are all similar throughout all four sets. Small differences exist in intensity but all similar colours appear to come from the same colour mix.

Perforation of all sets is 12. Some imperforate and part perforated stamps exist but, although of interest, they seem of little philatelic importance.

Official sets exist for Nicaragua, ten values from 1c to 10 pesos all in yellow brown and for Ecuador seven values from 1c to 1 sucre all in ultramarine. All are rare on cover. Kilian Nathan sent me photostats of four wrappers for Nicaragua franked with officials, one 2c to Sweden, two 5c one to Sweden and one to Switzerland and one 10c to Sweden. I do not know of any high values genuinely postally used.

Telegraph sets with the same design but in different colours exist for Nicaragua and Ecuador. The telegraph overprint is on rare occasions omitted and these stamps unoverprinted have been recorded postally used.

There are many unanswered questions arising from what I have written and hopefully specialists will write in and add to or correct what I have tried to record. Maybe some one else might attempt a collective study of Seebecks of other years. Never forget that after the change of financial control in the Hamilton Bank Note Company in 1894 the reprint story becomes much more complex and that, in this writer's opinion, is putting the matter politely!

References

Irving Green "That Man Seebeck", American Philatelic Congress Year Book 1946

Joseph Hahn and Joseph Sousa "El Salvador. The Seebeck Stamps", American Philatelic Congress Years Books 1977 and 1978.

Quast and Willer "Nicaragua: the Seebeck Issues", Collectors Club Philatelist, volumes 46 and 47.

CENTRAL AMERICAN GROUP MEETING. Victory Services Club 17 May 1986

The following members gave short displays:-

1. Richard Saundry — Costa Rica; the Flood Relief Flights of 1928/9.

2. D C Bailey — Costa Rican picture postcards including scenes along the railway route from Limon to San José; a colourful and attractive display with many interesting cancellations.

3. Denis Kilner — Nicaraguan provisional postal stationery 1901-16; an in-depth and well presented exhibit showing how the postal authorities got round the problem of change of denominations in various ways.

(We hope to have an article on this subject by Denis Kilner in a future issue - Ed)

4. John Evans — Canal Zone; a thematic display of the Panama Canal story telling of the political intrigue involved.

5. Richard Saundry — Coasta Rican official letters; the display opened with a short showing of the official adhesives and then developed into a comprehensive display of covers emanating from official governmental and officially sanctioned charitable organisations. It was official policy not to cancel the adhesives in the pre-1916 period, after which they were cancelled in the normal manner but can be readily distinguishable from "used" official stamps sold direct to philatelists in that the correctly used official stamps are invariably found with punched holes.

6. Douglas Bayliss — A selection of the stamps of Mexico from the eagle issue up to the first airs. Many interesting errors were included.

7. Anthony Wilkinson — Off-shore islands of Honduras and Panama. Both exhibits showed that interesting postal history displays could be made from more modern material, much of which must have been really scarce. The Panama section won for Anthony the Midland Federation Annual Cup.

An excellent and varied meeting which had been well and thoughtfully organised by Richard Saundry and we look forward to another meeting from our Central American Group in the coming season.

JUDICANS

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SEEBECK - HERO OR VILLAIN? by DANILO A MUESES

The above book summarises the whole Seebeck story. It has been recently published and is in Spanish. Señor Mueses has graciously given us the permission to translate the book and to serialise our translation in the Central American Newsletter. This important work will start in our next number.